

John Dickson, water sculpture, *Nethermind* exhibit

for the casual stroller who followed the neon-painted arrows and wandered into *Nethermind's* "Votive Chamber;" for the Friday night shoppers, mall-rats and the slightly dazed streetperson who were drawn into "True to Form" by *From the Pit*; for the perpetually rushing Bay Street mogul who may have paused on his cellular phone when confronted with Gary Evan's *Grove Paintings* in an empty store front window, the possibility of what art can be may actually be addressed. And for the regular goers-to-galleries there is the promise of seeing something a little different.

At 100 Yonge Street Gary Evan's recent oil paintings provide a view of lush greenery and dense foliage in direct antithesis to the cement and angular steel structures which surround it. Located at street level, these bucolic paintings seem a slightly bizarre background for all the late 20th century hunters and chest-pounders racing past. This contrast between Evan's images and their surroundings is a natural evolution from his earlier

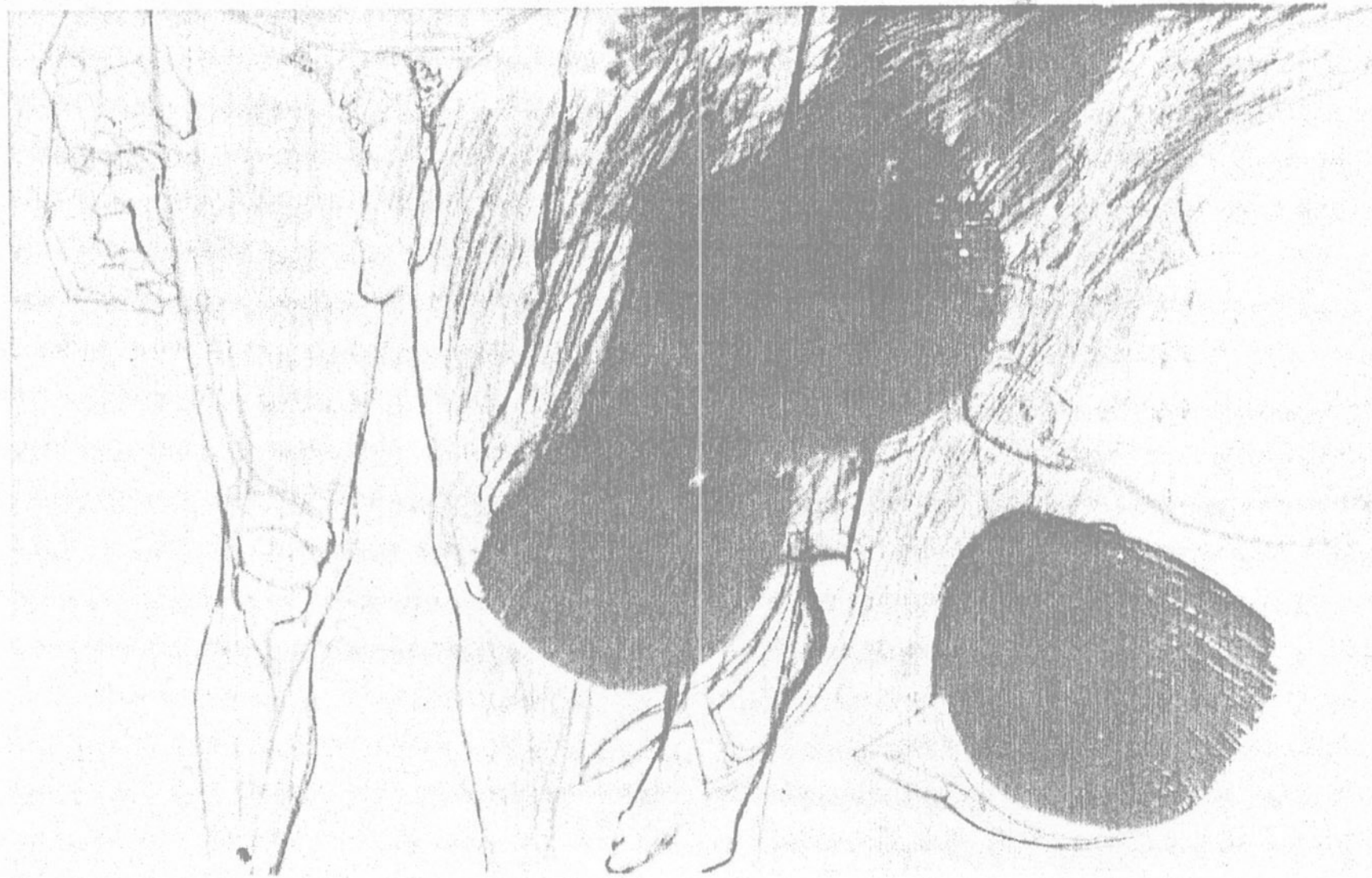
works which depicted elements of the man-made world juxtaposed against patches of grass or bushes. In doing so, Evan's intent was "...to show the perversity in which nature was treated by society."

And it is this juxtaposition of images and surroundings that enhances the success, not just of the specific works on view, but of the entire 100 Yonge Street locale. Paul Petro, the artist/dealer responsible for this and other maverick art projects,

continues to showcase impressive artists, such as Jeannie Thib and Gretchen Sankey, at this venue.

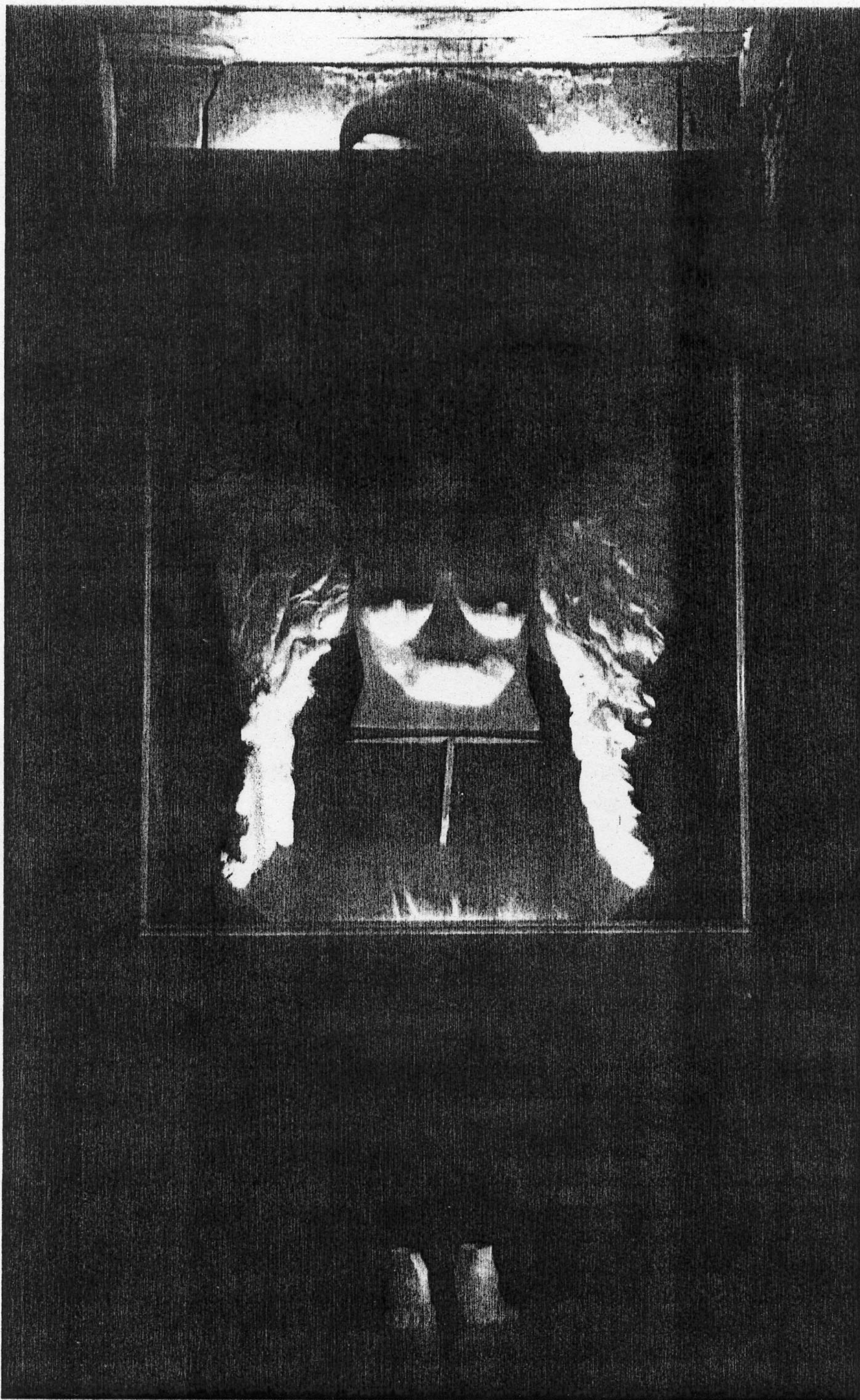
The *Nethermind* artists (Tom Dean, John Dickson, Catherine Heard, Greg Hefford, Miki McCarty, Mary-Catherine Newcomb, Rienhard Reitzenstein, Lyla Rye, Carl Skelton, Max Streicher and Anastasia Tzeckas) are singularly and collectively the most highly regarded of our current vanguard artists. Reacting directly to the spaces *Nethermind* explores possibilities - in space and in art. Last year's show in a

parking garage highlighted works which dealt with that space by playing with its hiddenness, heaviness and sense of enclosure. This year, in a large empty warehouse the works are lighter and play with, rather than against, the particular space. White sheets billow in a contrived breeze, a giant meaty tongue sticks out at you as you enter, "Dr. Skelton" has an office with wretched devices at hand, and John Dickson's water sculpture echoes eternally in the



Krys Verrall, *The Yearning Series*, graphite on paper, *True to Form* exhibit





Miki McCartney, *the Mental Cabinet*, *Nethermind* exhibit, photo: Lyla Rye

darkness, leaving one wondering what sort of netherworld they have indeed stepped into.

There is something in every *Nethermind* show which appeals in some way to the irrational part of our psyches. Laws of physics, proportion and com-

mon-sense are subverted in favour of a wonderland which supplants reality with mythology and monsters. By addressing the irrational and subconscious the artists of *Nethermind* explore the power of images, icons and totems. Their collectiveness

allows for their work, however personal or individualistic it may be, to be seen in a kind of "tribal" context.

**T** *True to Form* was mounted at the Dufferin Mall by the collective *From the Pit* which includes Catherine Beaudette, Michael Caines, Michael Cho, Darlene Cole, Jason Dunda, Michele Fenniak, Adam Lee Fingret, Martha Fleury, Vlad Gropic, Debbie Hryb, Andrew McPhail, Richard Mongiat, Gretchen Sankey, David Sylvestre, Adrianna van Drunen, Drys Verrail and Barb Webb.

It is the second year of artists' installations at the mall. Last year's group placed works throughout the mall. This year, the exhibition takes place in an empty store space next to the food court. Rather than installations, the works on display are paintings and drawings.

The exhibit's genesis was to show works by artists working with the figure or representational form rather than having some overriding "theme." The mediums (painting and drawing) were seen as showing a kind of resistance against the dominance of technology in much of today's artmaking. As such, being "true to form" can be related not just to the subject matter but also to artistic intention. Nothing about this exhibition is conventional or tired though. This show presents the viewer with some truly incredible and innovative artwork

Interestingly, many of the works on view combine to create a prevailing mood of edginess. There was a somewhat dark or sinister feel to much of the content. The art itself although it was expertly and impressively created, was shown in an industrial landscape, which despite its



rich colour hinted at malevolence. For example, a woman stares impassively while a bleeding (dead? acting?) man lies beside her, and two sullen men broodingly confront us. The viewer is left wondering whether "the pit" referred to by the collective, consists of the isolation and fear that pervades much of the world.

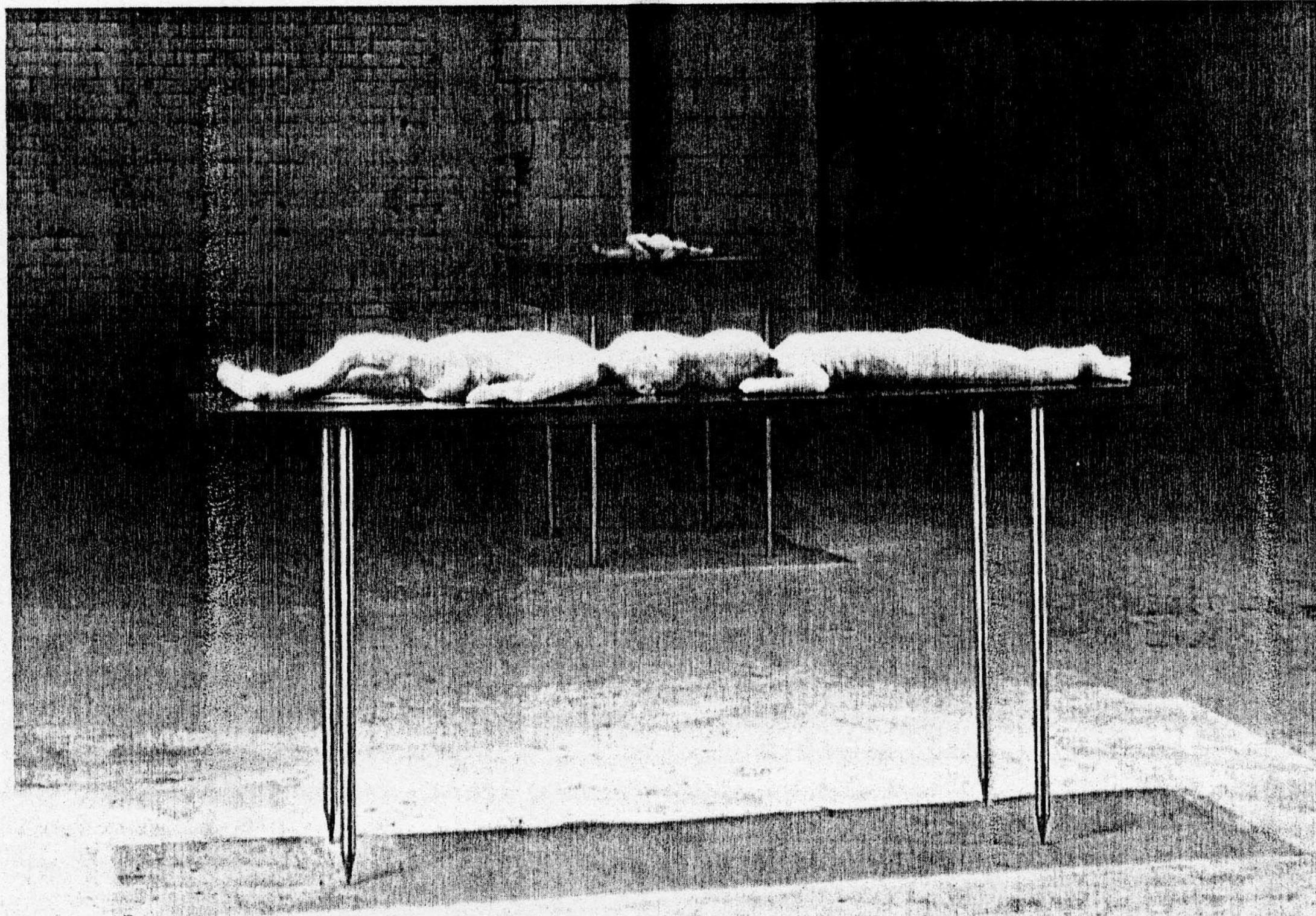
But the exhibition, in refusing to be easily pigeonholed, also included brighter but equally intense works. Wryly toppling religious and art-historical icons, Richard Longett replaces Madonnas with truncated referees against gold backgrounds and an artist floats obliviously against a frayed and worn pattern. Darlene Coles' exuberant brush work enhances the romantically idyllic mood of her works. And Krys Verrall, subtly uses the simplest of tools - pencil and paper - to create a work which delicately but powerfully explores yearning, desire and love.

In continuing these alternate art exhibitions, artists have the ability to transform not just a space but an entire art experience for themselves and for the viewers without being didactic or preachy. This isn't to say that everyone that goes to these shows will come out hav-

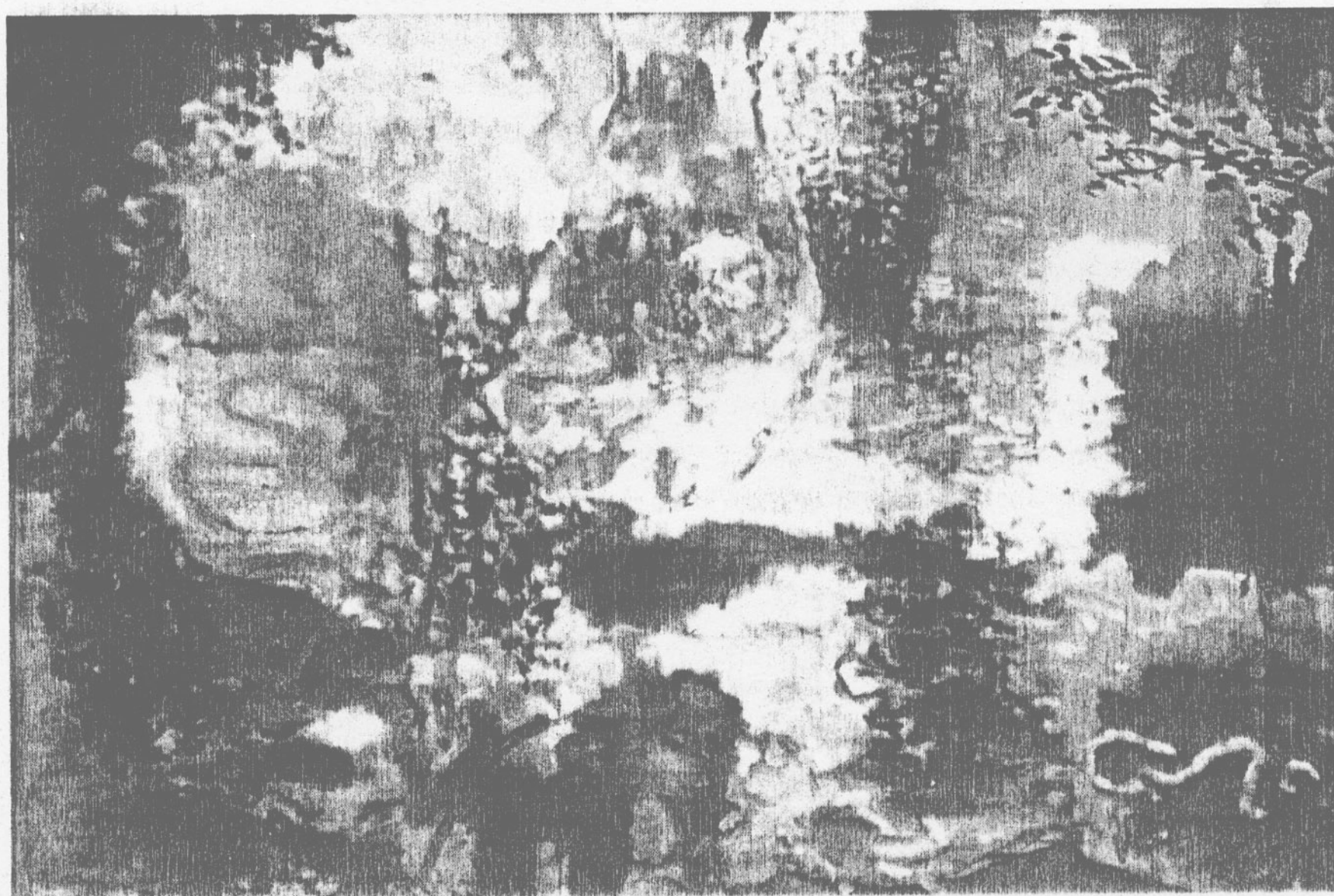
ing experienced some sort of artistic epiphany though. While heading towards the *True to Form* opening a couple of young guys passed by saying "Keep going down the hall - there's a great party with cheap beer." Still, at

least those boys went in, and for whatever their reason, they saw art on a Friday night. ■

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Catherine Heard, untitled installation, *Nethermind* exhibit, photo: Simon Glass



Gary Evans, *Lake*, oil on canvas, at 100 Yonge Street